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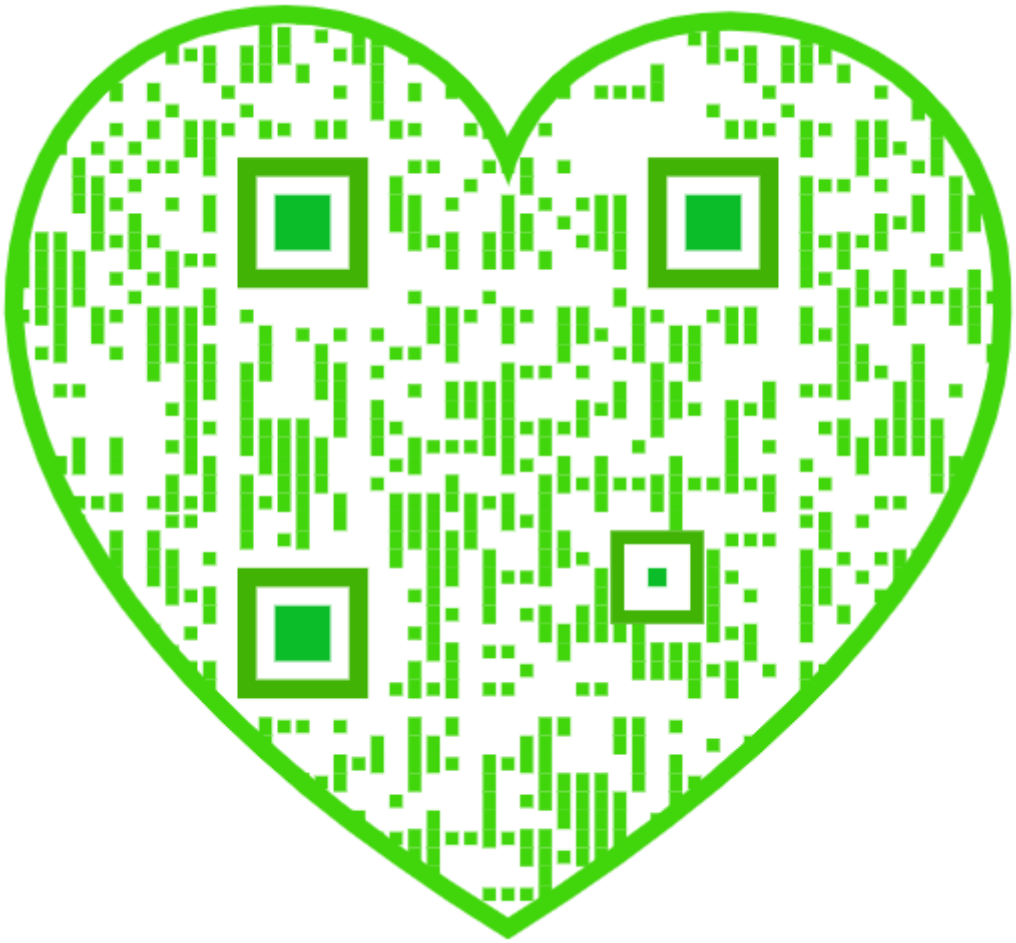

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A Christmas Idyl.

ONE Christmas Eve in their cottage alone,
Sat cobbler Jack and his old wife Joan;
The storm without raged loud and high,
And the dark clouds hung in the wintry sky;
Old Joan was rocking to and fro,
And she thought of the boy who long ago,
One bright and sunny summer's day,
Left the old cottage and ran away.

"If God knoweth best; will he ever for me,
Bring me my sailor lad back from the sea?
Will I ever behold my own darling boy?
God knoweth best if he'll give me that joy,
Before death cometh. Oh, God, let me see
The boy who was all in the world to me;"
And then on their knees the sorrowing pair,
Offered to God a silent prayer.

The Christmas bells rang loud and sweet.
Loud and sweet on the frosty air;
The snow was piled high in the village street,
And the trees were stark and bare.
Old Joan and Jack, they tottered to prayer,
Tottered arm and arm together;
They reached the church porch, and kneeling there
They felt not the frosty weather.
And above the chimes and the busy hum,
Rose the grand anthem—"Christ has come!"

Many a year had passed since then ;
Grim poverty, want, and sorrow and pain
Had been the hard lot of Joan and Jack,
As they watched for the boy who never came back ;—
Watched for him through long weary years,
Watched for him with sorrowing tears ;
And each stormy night as the two sat there,
They offered for him a silent prayer.

"What are you thinking of, old wife Joan,"
Said Jack as he wiped away his tears,
"Thinking," she answered, "God alone,
Knows the sorrow I've suffered through all these
years
For the boy who ran away to sea,—
The boy who cometh not back to me."
"Peace, peace," cried Jack, "let the poor boy rest ;
Peace, peace, good wife, for God knoweth best."

Back in the cottage were Jack and Joan,
Old Jack smoked in his easy chair,
His wife in the chimney corner alone,
Breathed for her boy a silent prayer.
There's a tap at the door, and a bearded man
Clasps old wife Joan with his stalwart arm.
Although she could scarcely his features scan,
The dame felt no alarm ;
She was pressed to his heart, and she knew that he,
Was her darling boy come back from sea.

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